

voice to the bipartisan call for significant changes in our health care system. This is only one step in the process of the public discussion of ideas for improving our health care system. I also intend to continue working with Chairman BAUCUS and members of the Senate Finance Committee on his health care reform agenda.

We have serious problems, and we need to solve them. So it's time to get to work.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE AND DISPLACED IRAQIS ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight a bill my distinguished colleague, Senator CARDIN of Maryland and I introduced last week. S. 3509 addresses the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Iraq and potential security breakdown resulting from the mass displacement of Iraqis inside Iraq and as refugees into neighboring countries.

If passed, this bill will help the United States address the needs of millions of Iraqis who have been forced to flee from their homes. The heart of the bill requires the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive regional strategy to address this humanitarian crisis. Senator CARDIN and I are joined in this effort by our colleagues, Senators BINGAMAN and VOINOVICH, who have cosponsored the bill.

Unfortunately, we were not able to reach agreement to have this legislation placed on the Foreign Relations Committee business agenda this week. We may not have enough time left this year to bring this bill to the floor. I hope that is not the case—and if so, it is my hope that the State Department recognizes the need to formulate a strategy and take prompt action itself.

It has been 5 years since the fall of Baghdad, and although this administration refuses to acknowledge it, Iraq and her neighbors are in the midst of a humanitarian crisis that threatens to undermine the stability of the Middle East. Wherever one stands on the future of the U.S. combat presence in Iraq, we have a moral responsibility to those innocent Iraqis who have been driven from their homes and fear for their lives and their children's lives every day.

As I noted during my floor statement marking World Refugee Day this past June, Iraqis are now one of the largest displaced populations in the world. According to host countries hosting Iraqi refugees, up to 2 million Iraqis have fled their homes for neighboring country in order to avoid sectarian and other violence. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, there are over 2.7 million internally displaced persons in Iraq.

Iraqi refugees are overwhelming the basic infrastructure of Iraq's neighbors, especially in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This raises troubling concerns about the region's stability and shifting sectarian balances. No one in

the region, and I must stress this, no one including host countries and refugees themselves expect Iraqi refugees to return anytime soon. This means we will be dealing with the exodus of displaced Iraqis for some time to come. Despite this administration's position that security conditions are improving in Iraq and life is normalizing, there are no signs of imminent return.

I saw firsthand the humanitarian and security implications of this crisis during my trip to the region last year. Beyond the obvious humanitarian and moral dimensions, this crisis has grave implications for our national security interests in the Middle East.

We often talk about our military surge in Iraq. What has been missing for far too long now has been our humanitarian surge to address basic needs—access to food, health care, shelter, drinking water, and education. This needs to be at the heart of any campaign to win “hearts and minds.” Strong U.S. leadership is critical in bringing the Iraqi Government, regional neighbors, and the international community to the table to discuss and implement concrete measures.

To date, Congress has not passed any comprehensive legislation addressing this humanitarian crisis. My bill, S. 3509, would prompt the next administration to act quickly and make the displacement of millions of Iraqis an urgent foreign policy priority. The heart of the bill requires the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive regional strategy that addresses the mass displacement of Iraqis. The strategy would: address the serious challenges facing Iraqi refugees; address the responsibility of the Iraqi Government to help meet the urgent needs of its citizens in the region; include an assessment of how much assistance is needed to help meet these needs; include an assessment of what conditions are necessary for the voluntary, safe, sustainable return of displaced Iraqis; include a description of the steps the U.S. Government has taken and will take to engage the international community to implement the strategy; and include plans to assess the impact of the strategy.

S. 3509 also includes reporting requirements from the State Department and the Government Accountability Office so that Congress is informed on how the administration is moving forward on the Iraqi humanitarian crisis.

Mr. President, I believe this bill will help define a roadmap for the United States and the international community on how we are meeting our basic obligations towards helping vulnerable Iraqis displaced as a result of the 2003 war. It will once again promote responsible American leadership abroad.

I want to thank the following groups who have supported S. 3509 thus far:

America's Development Foundation; Campaign for Innocent Victims in conflict, CIVIC; CARE; Catholic Relief Services; CHF International; Church World Service, Immigration and Ref-

ugee Program; EPIC: Promoting a Free & Secure Iraq; Friends Committee on National Legislation; International Medical Corps; International Relief and Development; International Rescue Committee; Leadership Conference of Women Religious; Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Mercy Corps; NETWORK; Presbyterian Church, USA, Washington Office; Refugees International; Save the Children; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

In response to your request for stories reflecting rising energy prices, I would offer the following: It is not unique to my family, but it affects everyone, everywhere, and as an elected official, I would advise you to keep it foremost in your mind when debating the need for renewable energy resources.

Our dependence on foreign oil has the effect of spilling our blood on foreign sands in wars that we sure should not be sticking our noses into. It is causing the rest of the world to see us as imperialists, rather than as the beacon of freedom, and it is edging our nation toward facism, as the wealthy have no qualms about sacrificing the poor to make sure the oil keeps flowing from these sources.

And, in the end, we the people lose. How can we call ourselves an independent nation if we are to rely on foreign energy? And how can we call ourselves a free people if we cannot afford basic necessities? We the people are seeing prices skyrocket, and our wages decline, despite what the annual reports say, as they do not account for the devaluation of the dollar.

WILLIAM.

P.S. Thank you for actually doing something about this mess.

Per your request, I am sending an e-mail in regard to my concern for the rising costs of fuel and the impact it is having upon me and my family.

As you know, Idaho is, to a great extent, a rural state. Most of our employment involves traveling to or from our job sites in automobiles. Since we aren't privileged enough to have a rapid transit system or bus

service, as in many urban city areas, we are forced to get to our employment by our own methods. I work at the Idaho National Laboratory. It is approximately 54 miles one way from my home. The nature of my job (foreman over maintenance craft personnel), requires that most of the time I use a personal auto to commute between my home and my job site. My auto gets approximately 30 miles per gallon, and it has a 17-gallon fuel tank. Each day's travel is approximately 108 miles divided by 30 mpg, giving an average of 3.6 gallons of fuel per day. At \$4 per gallon, it costs \$14.40 each day to drive to work. If we multiply this number by 9 (the number of work days in a two-week period), it costs me approximately \$130 every two weeks for fuel, just to get to work! Multiply that by 26 and my yearly cost (just to go to work) is approximately \$3,360. This does not count the fuel necessary for my wife to get to her place of employment, or the costs associated with the need to travel to buy groceries and other necessities. The average cost of our fuel has risen about \$1.30 per gallon since last year at this time. My wages have not compensated for the increase in fuel costs, nor has it compensated for the additional costs associated with the purchase of groceries and other commodities, just to survive.

Of course, we have to cut way back just to make ends meet. This also means that our choices for recreation (or even a date with my wife) are getting very limited because we must use more and more money to pay for fuel, groceries, and commodities necessary for our very existence. Why is it that we can send billions of dollars, each year, to countries who hate us and do not even use the money for what it is intended, yet let our own people suffer? Where's the justice? Why cannot we do something to help our own people for a change, fight terrorism in this country (gangs), and open up more of the reserves in our own country so that we do not have to be dependent upon foreign terrorists who control (actually are destroying) our economy and indeed the worldwide economical situation?

I have two brothers who work in the oil business in Wyoming. Their story of how much reserves we have differs greatly from what our politicians are telling us. Who are we to believe? Are we being misled? Are we being manipulated by selfish interests who would rather pass a "carbon tax" bill (when science has proven that there is, indeed, no global warming crisis) creating more taxpayer dollars to line their own pockets? I am a bit frustrated, but I really think that there is no real justification for how fast the cost of fuel has increased this year.

One more thing I would like to know, and that is why are we at the mercy of minority organizations with a lot of money, organizations like the "green" people, the environmentalists, or other groups who are at least partially to blame for our energy crisis? We need to be using more of our domestic resources and get away from foreign dependence. We need to put a few curbs on the organizations that are responsible for chasing all of our industry out of our country. Those people have ensured that there are so many outrageous controls on manufacturers, that they cannot reasonably make and market most of the things we use in this country, at a fair and competitive price because the costs of all of the regulations force these manufacturers to leave the country and build their products where the regulations are not prohibitive. Our country, unfortunately, can only rely upon the amount of paperwork done in a day to be able to claim to have done something useful. Even our complicated sensitive technologies are coming from overseas.

The best example I can use for how far downhill we have gone is to compare what we used to be able to do on the INL to what we can do today. We used to be able to get work done. A lot of work. We were productive. We built reactors, we maintained them and the various other systems necessary to make the rest of our facilities function well. We were not overwhelmed by piles of paperwork. Yes, there was paperwork, but it was nothing like we do today. Today, in our "world class" society, we have DOE regulating us out of work. We have a new company that has piled paperwork upon us to the point that not just the administrators are doing piles of it, but every man and woman from administrators to laborers, must process piles of paper each day, to do 'work.' Of course, since the advent of the new contract between DOE and BEA, we have consolidated the site and now we do about ¾ less that ever before. More mountainous is the paperwork. More signatures are required before work can begin. More signatures are required to 'complete' work. Plus, now we have found that the former Argonne personnel were not up to par with the rest of the site (we were running Argonne for 50 years without knowing what we were doing, nor how to do business, and we never killed anyone). Our ignorance has resulted in additional training for each and every person working at the facility. In fact, there is so much training, computer based and otherwise, little time to do work. Besides, we aren't focused upon how much work we can do 'safely,' instead, we are focused upon how safe we can be, doing little work in the name of 'safety.'

Yes, I am frustrated. I guess I am lucky that I am not in the Senate or Congress, because knowing what I know about how things are done here, and how much is wasted, I would seriously be working to close this site down. Tax payer money is being spent (actually wasted), and the tax payer only knows what the media tells them is being done with their money. This is not a responsible national lab any more.

Anyway, I have unloaded upon you again. Sorry for the apparent frustration, but I can see the mess because I am behind the curtain that hides it from the rest of the country. Thanks for listening.

BRENT, *Idaho Falls.*

We heat our home with propane; it is a 2,000 gallon tank. With the cost of propane, it would run us around \$3,000 to fill it. We did not do that we did it at \$250 at a time. We even ran out one time. Wood is costing a lot as well, at our age and work we have to buy it cut and delivered and that as well is expensive, yet without the wood stove our home would have cost to heat this year around \$8,000. Personally I believe in wind power and solar technology. Canada is experimenting with a trailer right now that is brought in that has wind power and wind solar on it. It is running farms capable of running the whole house and everything as well. So, if they are doing it right now, why are we not doing it? They run about \$40,000 right now. They are in the test run just to see how long and evident it is. I want one. If they are ready for the market place next year, I plan on getting one. I feel in the deepest part of my soul that the greed of man just might be too powerful. I am so pleased that you are doing your best to protect Mother Earth and the souls that live on her. Those whom are in denial and only live in the power of money will indeed pay at some point in there souls. So I hope this supports what needs to happen. I do, however, only believe in wind and sun, I feel that we cannot ask other countries to not use certain toxic and dangerous chemicals to destroy this

planet and not walk the talk. Thank You for all your hard work.

JEANINE.

I agree with the outrageous energy costs. Gasoline and fuel prices are totally unheard of. The constant rise in fuel costs has not only hindered the life style, we here in Idaho enjoy, outdoor activities, fishing and camping, but the farmers are also getting hammered. What in tarnation is happening? The rich just keep getting richer. My hat is off to the successful, prominent business people, but where do the working class fit in? Seems like the taxes keep going up right along with the cost of living, health care and so on.

I truly find it hard to believe that with all of the oil wells and refineries we have in the United States that we should not be in better shape. Where are these reserves being sent to? I see where the Republican Committee is asking for more drilling to take place in Alaska's wildlife areas. What's up with that? What happened to the presently existing Alaskan Pipeline? Did Wyoming, Texas and the sort all dry up?

Are we truly a "free nation" or are we relying on the foreign imports and markets to help us attain this freedom? If there is any.

I think the addressing of the country's issues have been a long time in coming, but is it too late? What do our children have to look forward to?

NATE.

I am a stay-at-home mom with four girls. My husband is college-educated and makes a good living for our family. But, with rising energy and gas prices, we are definitely feeling the pinch in our monthly budget (not to mention rising food prices as well). Ron works twelve miles from home. We do not have additional drivers in our household yet. The driving I do consists of basketball games, dance lessons, and church activities and household errands. We spend over \$280/month on gas. To conserve, Ron has begun carpooling at least once a week to work. That is not always easy, but the three drivers are trying to save some money. It is definitely something I think about everyday as I drive to and from town. I try to do all the errands I can at once. We have canceled a planned vacation to California this year to save the money. We hope to be able to do it next year.

I feel we live in a great country. There is more technology than ever before. I hope my country can help to make alternative fuel sources a reality. I know solar cars exist. I have seen one discussed on KTVB news recently. We need this type of research to fuel America's economy. The technology is out there. As an average Idahoan, I hope congress will help drive this process. The greatest country has great means to make great things happen for its people.

CINDY, *Boise.*

I find it pitiful that we even have to "convince" our law makers that there is a crisis. Maybe they should learn to live the way the rest of the country does. Paying \$4+ for a gallon of gas, \$4 for a gallon of milk, \$4 for a loaf of bread and just about the same for a dozen eggs. Already that trip to the store in my car costs more then I make in an hour of work. Come on, let us wake up and smell the coffee . . . oh, that is up to (cheap coffee) \$8 a pound. We need to start using our own resources and stop sending billions to our enemies. We are a proud nation, so let us start acting like one.

MARTY.

We are retired and on Social Security. If we have to buy more than one tank of gas a month, it is almost impossible to pay our

bills. We have an all electric home and electricity has also went way up in price. We watch propane and natural gas to see if it would be better for us to change, but they have also skyrocketed and just the cost of changing is unaffordable. We also live in fear of losing our Social Security and Medicare because they want to privatize it.

I think what you say you are trying to do now is the right thing but why did not you do this sooner before the tax cut for the rich oil companies was put in force and why do not you speak up and stop these tax cuts from becoming permanent. This is part of what is putting the squeeze on the American people. Thank you very much for giving me the chance to express my opinion.

LOIS.

I concur with policies that will take advantage of wind and solar power technologies, and renewable/alternative fuels. I wish you would reconsider the use of nuclear reactors as I am concerned for our safety and the waste disposable. Without a doubt, we (USA) need to take action ASAP please pass legislation so that we can start using our oil reserves but also start investing in new technologies so that some day we will not need oil all together. I have confidence in our abilities to get this done but it has to have the support of our government and you are in the position to help make a difference to help make the USA a better place to live. Thank you for your time.

UNSIGNED.

I recently traded my 4-wheel-drive Toyota pickup with 35,000 miles on it for a Toyota Camry that gets ten more miles per gallon. I was looking for a 2008 Camry LE 4-cylinder. There were none in stock. All sold out! The 2009 models are in now. The dealership Tom Scott Motors told me all the 4-cylinders were sold by the time gas prices hit \$3.50 per gallon. And the V6s were not selling. Two dealerships offered me \$1,000 to \$3,000 less than my pickup was worth as per Kelly Blue book citing the 4-wheel-drive gas guzzler option was the problem. They said I was lucky I was trading a Toyota and not a full-sized truck. They are not even taking them in trade now and, if they do, the offer is \$8,000 to \$9,000 back of Kelly Blue Book. I got \$13,750 for my trade. In March when gas was \$3.00. It was worth \$16,775 cash.

You know, it is the politicians that created this theft of Idaho assets in this regard. I am not convinced the politicians will resolve it any time soon. They should have started drilling and building refineries in the 1990s. But good luck with your efforts.

PERRY, *Meridian*.

TRIBUTE TO LINDA NORRIS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, late this fall, my longest-serving staff member, Linda Norris, will be retiring from my staff. Linda has provided 18 years of professional, tireless and dedicated service to the people of Idaho, first as a member of my first House campaign staff in the early 1990s, then as my regional director in Twin Falls, ID, and my State director of constituent services on my Senate staff while retaining her position as Twin Falls regional director. She spent the last few years here in my Washington, DC, office, finishing her time on my staff in her function as State director of constituent services. Linda has consistently worked long hours over the years, and helped me immeasurably by her excel-

lence in the field of constituent and community services and military and veteran relations.

When I met Linda in 1991, I was beginning my bid for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing the Second Congressional District of Idaho. She asked me very direct questions about my stand on issues, my goals were I to be elected, and my priorities. She vetted me. Once she was satisfied that I met her standards, she offered to take over regional operations for my campaign in south central Idaho in the Magic Valley and Sun Valley area. That began what was to be a highly successful working relationship of close to two decades, and a close personal friendship of a lifetime for me, my wife and family.

Linda has worked diligently on every task that she took on, either given to her or ideas she pursued independently. She has been involved in land issues, helping as we negotiated sensitive access and conservation policies with the tribes, the Air Force, the Idaho Department of Lands, private entities and the counties in the 1990s. She was my office liaison for the Harriman hiking trail in Sun Valley that finally was completed just a few years ago. A nurse by training, Linda is the reason why I became so closely involved in domestic violence issues. She was the first to crystallize the issue by arranging for me to visit a safe house where I met two children physically and emotionally devastated by brutality in their home. At that moment, I pledged to do all I could to work toward eliminating this terrible violence that occurs in too many homes across the United States and beyond.

Linda has a special place in her heart for the military and for veterans. As an Army spouse, she brought a special sense of empathy to her work, together with an extraordinarily perceptive understanding of protocol that goes a long way in ensuring that a Member of Congress's office maintains a positive relationship with Department of Defense officials. The importance of this cannot be understated when it comes to helping Idaho military members and veterans when they have questions or concerns about military and veterans' affairs issues. Linda leaves my office held in very high esteem by both Idaho and national military and veterans affairs officials. Linda also has been solely responsible for the past 15 years for the military academy nomination process in my office. The other members of the Idaho delegation have even advised new staff members to talk to her about the proper procedures and protocol for this complicated and very important process. And, close to 10 years ago, Linda suggested that I create the Spirit of Idaho and Spirit of Freedom awards. The Spirit of Idaho award recognizes extraordinary efforts of Idahoans for community service performed outside of their work life. The Spirit of Freedom Award is one that I present annually to veterans and vol-

unteers for their service to our country and to veterans.

Linda has worked behind the scenes, helping countless constituents when they encounter difficulties with federal agency processes and procedures. She has done everything from facilitate a faster passport application, to helping a number of Idahoans receive Purple Hearts and other military awards, and even helped family members obtain them for relatives long deceased. Linda has celebrated with people who have had long-term problems resolved and cried with mothers who have gotten frightening, desperate calls from a son or daughter deployed overseas and going through bouts of depression or worse. Through it all, she has maintained her composure, professionalism and judicious compassion. Linda also has a reputation for being a patient teacher and mentor. She has provided new staff members with effective training and advice.

In all the years Linda has worked for me, she has put Idahoans first and strictly adhered to the ethical and moral requirements of congressional staff work. I could ask for no better service nor could Idahoans. Linda Norris will be missed by staff and constituents alike, and I will miss her professional counsel and hard work. Fortunately, my wife and I have years of her friendship to look forward to, and she knows that Susan and I wish her the best as she begins a new and different journey in her life.

ADOPTION AND CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today I would like to talk about the history of adoption and child welfare policy and the importance of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 which passed in wrap-up on Monday, September 22, 2008.

First, I want to commend Chairman BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY and their professional staffs who have done incredible work to forge a consensus and develop this bold package. Subcommittee Chairman MCDERMOTT and Congressman WELLER and their staffs showed the same leadership and commitment in the House. It was a privilege to be part of the process. This is a strong package with extraordinary broad-based support from the adoption community, child advocates, and even State groups. That consensus was essential to move the legislation and act on behalf of vulnerable children in foster care.

This strong bipartisan, bicameral package will help promote adoption, support guardianship, and improve the outcomes in foster care. The package and the process build on the legacy of the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act. In 1997, a bipartisan group came together and developed legislation that started the adoption incentive program, an initiative that spurred genuine change in the child welfare system